Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

SECRET

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/PAN:AMBASSADOR JORDEN
APPROVED BY ARA:FDEVINE
S/S-O:RPERITO
ARA/PAN:EJNADEAU
----------242225Z 028959 /73
O 242038Z MAY 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE
INFO JCS
DIA/DN202 IMMEDIATE
SECRETARY OF ARMY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 119650

EXDIS, FM AMB JORDEN, MIL ADDEE HANDLE AS SPECAT EXLCUSIVEFOR

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS:PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: TENSIONS IN PANAMA

PLEASE PASS TO GOVERNOR AND CINC.

1. I SHARE GOVERNOR PARFITT'S CONCERNS OVER THE POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENCE IN CURRENT SITUATION AS EXPRESSED IN RECENT MESSAGE. CAUSE IS TO CONSIDERABLE EXTENT INHERENT IN PRESENT ATMOSPHERE OF UNCERTAINTY AS REGARDS TREATY PROSPECTS AND WHAT SUCH TREATY WILL MEAN FOR CANAL EMPLOYEES AS WELL AS FOR U.S.-PANAMA RELATIONS. MY OWN PERCEPTION IS THAT THERE IS SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR RISING LEVEL OF TENSIONS OVER RECENT PAST. IN ANY CASE, THIS IS A TIME FOR ALL CONCERNED TO SHOW RESTRAINT RATHER

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THAN POINT FINGER OF BLAME AT OTHERS.

2. ACTING ON GOVERNOR'S SUGGESTIONS, I HAVE DISCUSSED THIS MATTER IN SOME DETAIL WITH AMBASSADOR LEWIS AND WITH PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATORS. I HAVE POINTED OUT THAT MEDIA CAMPAIGN ATTACKING U.S. MILITARY WAS ILL-CONCEIVED AND COULD ONLY EXACERBATE RELATIONS. I ALSO STRESSED EXPLOSIVE

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POTENTIAL OF SCATTERED RECENT INCIDENTS, ANY ONE OF WHICH COULD HAVE ESCALATED RAPIDLY INTO MUTUALLY UNWANTED CONFRONTATION. THAT, I HAVE TOLD PANAMANIANS, WOULD HAVE SHARPLY NEGATIVE EFFECT ON OUR MAJOR COMMON BUSINESS, COULD DIRECTLY INTERFERE WITH, IF NOT BREAK, OUR CURRENT NEGOTIATING EFFORTS, AND WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE DESTRUCTIVE CONSEQUENCES ON CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC OPINION HERE.

3. IMMEDIATE PANAMANIAN REACTION WAS TO CRITICIZE QUOTE TRIGGER HAPPY UNQUOTE ZONE POLICE AND EXTREMISTS WHO WISH TO DESTROY NEGOTIATIONS. I CUT OFF THAT APPROACH BY SAYING THAT THERE WAS PLENTY OF BLAME TO GO AROUND AND THAT PANAMANIAN NATIONAL GUARD HAD NOT SHOWN, FOR ITS PART, THE KIND OF QUICK RESPONSE AND DETERMINED EFFORT TO DAMP DOWN INCIDENTS THAT I WOULD HAVE EXPECTED IN THIS SITUATION. IN ANY CASE, THE POINT WAS NOT WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE MOST FOR THIS OR THAT INCIDENT. WHAT WE HAD TO BE CONCERNED WITH WAS THE TOTAL ATMOSPHERE. WE HAD TO TAKE STEPS TOGETHER TO SEE THAT UNPLEASANT EVENTS WERE AVOIDED AND, IF THEY OCCURRED, THAT THEY WERE DEALT WITH QUICKLY, EFFICIENTLY AND RESPONSIBLY. SPECIFICALLY, I URGED THAT LIAISON CHANNELS BETWEEN POLICE AUTHORITIES BE MADE TRULY EFFECTIVE AND THAT THEY OPERATE AS A TWO-WAY STREET.

4. PANAMANIANS THEN ASSURED ME THAT THEY UNDERSTOOD WHAT I WAS SAYING AND SHARED MY CONCERN ABOUT THE GENERAL SITUATION. THEY PROMISED TO TAKE STEPS TO WORK TOWARD WHAT I HAD DESCRIBED. SPECIFICALLY, ROMULO ESCOBAR SAID

HE WOULD CALL COLONEL NORIEGA TO REPEAT THE POINTS I HAD MADE AND TO ENCOURAGE HIM TO ACT IN THAT SPIRIT. AMBASSADOR LEWIS ALSO SAID HE WOULD REINFORCE ESCOBAR'S MESSAGE DIRECTLY WITH GENERAL TORRIJOS IN HIS NEXT COMMUNICATION. I SAID I THOUGHT THAT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL AND THEY ASKED ME TO CONVEY A SIMILAR MESSAGE TO OUR OFFICIALS. I SAID I KNEW THAT THE GOVERNOR WOULD BE DOING ALL HE COULD TO URGE CARE AND RESTRAINT ON HIS PERSONNEL BUT THAT I WOULD REPEAT MY PERSONAL REQUEST ALONG THESE LINES. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 24-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE119650
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Drafter: AMBASSADOR JORDEN
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Film Number: D770185-0624
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770522/aaaaatii.tel
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Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
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Original Previous Classification: n/a
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Reference: n/a
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Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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SAS ID: 2387269
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TENSIONS IN PANAMA PLEASE PASS TO GOVERNOR AND CINC.
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PN, US, PQ
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